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**Happy Equal Pay Day! Find out how underpaid you are.**



By [Shirley Leung](#) Globe Columnist April 12, 2016

Not everyone believes the gender wage gap is a problem. But information is power.

That's the thinking behind a new online salary calculator that state Treasurer Deb Goldberg launched Tuesday, Equal Pay Day. It's a symbolic date that represents how far into the year women must work to earn what men made in the previous year.

I've been playing around [with the calculator](#), as well as the treasurer's new website where it is housed, [equalpayma.com](#). You can look up the wage gap by sector.

Here's what I found in my own industry: Men on average make \$4 more an hour than women. Plug in my age, and I learned that a female journalist on average has made about \$8,000 less a year. The gap adds up: \$178,000 over my 22-year career.

Rather than sit in my cubicle and stew, I can do something about it. The calculator allows you to generate an anonymous e-mail to your employer. Just supply the address.

It reads: "Many businesses and organizations do not know that they have a gender wage gap. This is not just a women's issue; it is a family issue that affects the economic security and well-being of our state. In fact, research shows that the wage gap can affect the profitability of an organization."

The letter also invites your boss to visit the treasurer's website to download an employer tool kit on closing the gender wage gap. Do an internal audit, make salary information more transparent, create a gender-neutral workplace culture so that both men and women feel comfortable taking time off for child care.

Do I dare to send an e-mail to Globe owner John Henry?

Done and done.

I love the idea of being able to say something in a nonconfrontational way, and if enough workers do so, our employers might start to take a closer look.

That's what Goldberg hopes to achieve with her new website. The data behind the calculator come from the US Census, which is based on individuals self-reporting their salaries. The sectors are too broad. I fall into arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media, which encompasses a wide array of jobs, many much different than what I do at the Globe.

What would be better is using actual wage data from employers, which the city of Boston is attempting to do in an [unprecedented effort to create such a database](#).

So for now, the census figures might be as good as it gets in showing how in Massachusetts, women make on average [82 cents to every \\$1 a man takes home](#). The ratio is worse for black women, who collect 61 cents, and Latina women, who earn 50 cents.

There are doubters. Believe me, I hear from them every time I write about the wage gap. They'll say there are good reasons why women are paid less: They take time off to raise kids, they choose lower-paying jobs in exchange for more flexible schedules.

Goldberg scoffs at this.

"Equal pay for equal work," she told me. "Whether someone takes time off or not, if they are being hired into a cohort of jobs and they are being paid less in that job, that's not right."

"No matter how you look at it, even if you want to be conservative, the wage gap exists," she added.

Smaller paychecks can have a ripple effect. Household incomes are depressed, making it that much harder to pay the bills and put food on the table.

"That in itself suggests an economic problem for the whole state, not just for women," said Goldberg.

Now in my own career, it is only in recent years that have I been brave enough to speak up about compensation. My confidence grew not based on my own sense of value, but out of my experience as a manager.

Before I was a columnist, I was the editor overseeing the Globe's business section. After a few weeks on the job, I noticed something quickly: The long line of men forming outside my office to ask for a raise.

It's not a workplace legend! Men obsess about money more than the women. I'm no longer shy about making sure I'm fairly compensated. Just ask a number of people I report to, from editor Brian McGrory on down.

The war over wages must be fought on two fronts: Getting women to speak up, and getting employers to fix and prevent gender inequities in the workplace.

There's power in numbers.

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